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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 001518

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BOSNIA - SILAJDZIC STOKES THE FLAMES OF A RESTIVE
REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

REF: SARAJEVO 1507

Classified By: Michael J. Murphy. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Bosniak Tri-Presidency member Haris Silajdzic has ratcheted up his anti-Republika Srpska (RS) rhetoric, this time tking his vitriol to the international stage. Hedelivered his most recent potshot during his Septmber 23 speech to the UN General Assembly, at whic he declared -- as he has repeatedly asserted wihin Bosnia -- that the RS was "created by genocide" and that the UN should take steps to correct that genocide (implying the abolition of the RS). These remarks precipitated an outcry among Bosnian Serb parties and press, with RS PM Milorad Dodik asserting that the RS would sooner call a referendum on independence than accept changes to the Dayton Accords. Silajdzic's UNGA grandstanding followed a September 15 announcement that he had brought a court case against the RS for unilaterally engaging in foreign policy with the USG through a US-based lobbying firm. During his press conference, Silajdzic strongly implied that the USG should do more to keep the Serbs in check. That stunt generated less angst among the Serbs -- all parties dismissed it as a campaign ploy ahead of Bosnia's October 5 municipal elections -- and has lost steam even within Silajdzic's party. We assess that unlike the recent declaration from the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) calling on OHR to keep anti-Dayton rhetoric at bay (reftel), Silajdzic's rhetoric is almost entirely an election stunt, aimed at presenting himself and his party as the strongest defenders of Bosniak interests. It most likely will, however, contribute to an escalation of rhetoric from the Serbs, who are tossing around the idea of an independence referendum with increasing aplomb. END SUMMARY.

At UNGA, the Gloves Come Off

¶2. (SBU) Silajdzic rattled the cages of every major Serb party when he demanded the abolition of the RS in his September 23 speech to the UN General Assembly. He told the UNGA that the RS was "created by genocide on Bosnia and Herzegovina," adding that the UN should "correct the errors made during the war in Bosnia and send a clear message that the genocide will not be rewarded." The Serb parties reacted vociferously to Silajdzic's statements, calling for an emergency session of the RS National Assembly on October 7 with one item on the agenda -- to react to Silajdzic's speech. Nearly every RS newspaper commented on the speech, including a headline in the sensationalist daily Fokus entitled "War Again." Nebojsa Radmanovic, Serb member of the Tri-Presidency, said that the speech came from "a war-leader

who missed his time" and constituted "a call to destroy Dayton, a call to push Bosnia and Herzegovina into uncertainty."

13. (SBU) The most obstreperous condemnation of Silajdzic's speech came from RS PM Milorad Dodik, who publicly stated that Bosnian Serbs would sooner resort to a referendum on independence than accept the abolition of the RS or the revision of the Dayton Accords. (Note: Dodik the previous weekend made equally unconstructive statements calling for the return of competencies to the state, arguing that if that did not occur, Bosnia should be peacefully partitioned -- reported septel. End Note.) Dodik accused Silajdzic of "trying to devalue any attempts at consensus in Bosnia and Herzegovina," arguing that Bosniak parties have started "an orchestrated campaign to destroy the Dayton Agreement and the RS." He noted that although Silajdzic spoke to the UNGA in his capacity as presiding member of the Tri-Presidency, Silajdzic represented his personal views in this speech, not those of the Bosnian state.

Court Case Sparks Only Chuckles among Serbs

14. (SBU) The seemingly unrelated prelude to the UNGA antagonism came at a September 15 press conference in Bosnia, at which Silajdzic declared that he had brought a complaint to the Bosnian Constitutional Court against the RS. He asserted that the RS had engaged in foreign policy activities -- an exclusive competency of the state -- with the US government. Silajdzic complained that the RS employed the US

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lobbying firm Quinn, Gillespie, and Associates (QGA), which it paid \$120,000 per month to lobby for RS interests in Washington. Silajdzic claimed that he had documents from the US Department of Justice showing that the relationship between the RS and QGA was not limited to cultural liaison, as the RS had claimed. Rather, according to Silajdzic, QGA representatives met with officials from Congress and the State Department to push for the RS position on constitutional reform, the status of the RS, and Bosnia's municipal elections.

15. (C) Both RS PM Milorad Dodik and Serb Tri-Presidency member Nebojsa Radmanovic publicly responded to Silajdzic's comments but with far less acrimony than the UNGA speech. They stressed that the RS did nothing illegal by establishing offices abroad and that Silajdzic was using this court case as a ploy to keep the international community in BiH as long as possible. Dodik added that the RS has offices elsewhere besides Washington and plans to expand its network of these offices. RS President Rajko Kuzmanovic opined that Silajdzic is irritated by the fact that the RS is increasingly recognizable in the world, adding that Silajdzic's lobbying for the abolishment of the RS is itself anti-Dayton and unconstitutional. All in all, though, two of Radmanovic's advisors told us that Serb leaders are not concerned about this case, as they believe it has no merit and the Constitutional Court has no jurisdiction. According to them, Radmanovic sees this case as simply an attempt by Silajdzic to win votes in the elections.

Comment

16. (C) We view Silajdzic's stunts primarily as a ploy to win votes in the October elections. He has long advocated -- with varying degrees of subtlety -- the abolition of the entities, and grandstanding on the international stage is probably an attempt to show his voters that he has the ear of the international community in his quest to protect Bosniak interests from the Serbs. Our contacts in SBiH even told us that Silajdzic does not expect any results from the court case, nor does he believe that a court verdict in his favor would change Dodik's behavior. This electioneering is

concerning not as much for its content -- Silajdzic has presented nothing new -- but for its potential to exacerbate intransigence and unconstructive rhetoric from the Serbs. Dodik is already talking about an independence referendum with increasing alacrity. Comments like these from Silajdzic will only add fuel to the fire and, at a minimum, deepen the rift between the entities in advance of post-election talks on essential reforms.

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